Night Prayer during Ramadhan (Al-Qiyaam or Taraweeh)

Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to encourage us to pray at night in Ramadaan, without making it obligatory. Then he said, 'Whoever prays at night in Ramadaan out of faith and the hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven.' When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) died, this is how things were (i.e., Taraaweeh was not prayed in congregation), and this is how they remained during the khilaafah of Abu Bakr (may Allaah be pleased with him), until the beginning of the khilaafah of 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him)."

'Amr ibn Murrah al-Juhani said: "A man from Qudaa'ah came to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and said, 'O Messenger of Allaah! What do you think if I testify that there is no god except Allaah, and that you, Muhammad, are His Messenger, and I pray the five daily prayers, and fast in the month (of Ramadaan), and pray at night in Ramadaan, and pay zakaah?' The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'Whoever dies on that will be among the siddeeqeen (those who tell the truth) and the martyrs.'"

Laylat al-Qadr and its timing

2 – The best of its nights is Laylat al-Qadr, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever prays at night during Laylat al-Qadr {and manages to "catch" it} out of faith and the hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven."

3 – According to the most correct opinion, it is the twenty-seventh night of Ramadaan. Most of the ahaadeeth state this, such as the hadeeth of Zurr ibn Hubaysh, who said: "I heard Ubayy ibn Ka'b saying – and it was said to him that 'Abd-Allaah ibn Mas'ood said: 'Whoever follows the Sunnah will 'catch' Laylat al-Qadr!' – Ubayy (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: 'May Allaah have mercy on him, he did not want people to take it for granted and only stay up to pray on one night. By the One besides Whom there is no other god, it is in Ramadaan – he was swearing without a doubt – and by Allaah, I do know which night it is. It is the night in which the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) commanded us to

pray (qiyaam). It is the night the morning of which is the twenty seventh, and the sign of it is that the sun rises on that morning white and without rays.'"

In another report, this was attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). (Reported by Muslim and others).

Praying qiyaam in congregation

It is allowed to pray qiyaam in congregation, indeed it is better than praying individually, because this is what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did himself and explained its virtues. Abu Dharr (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "We fasted Ramadaan with the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and he did not lead us in qiyaam at all until there were only seven days left, when he led us in prayer until a third of the night had passed. When there were six days left, he did not lead us in qiyaam. When there were five days left, he led us in prayer until half the night had passed. I said, 'O Messenger of Allaah, I wish that you had continued until the end of the night.' He said, 'If a man prays with the imaam until he finishes, it will be counted as if he prayed the whole night.' When there were four nights left, he did not lead us in qiyaam. When there were three nights left, he brought together his family, his wives and the people, and led us in qiyaam until we were afraid that we would miss al-falaah. I asked, 'What is al-falaah?' he said, 'Suhoor. Then he did not lead us in qiyaam for the rest of the month.'" (Saheeh hadeeth reported by the authors of *Sunan*).

The reason why the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did not continually lead the people in praying qiyaam in congregation

5 - The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did not lead them in qiyaam for the rest of the month because he feared that it would then become obligatory, and they would not be able to do it, as is stated in the hadeeth of 'Aa'ishah reported in *al-Saheehayn* and elsewhere. Following the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), that fear was no longer a factor, because Allaah had completed the religion. The reason for not praying qiyaam in congregation during Ramadaan no longer applied, and the previous ruling, that congregational prayer is something prescribed in Islam, remained in effect. So 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) revived the practice, as is recorded in *Saheeh al-Bukhaari* and elsewhere.

Women can pray qiyaam in congregation

Women can attend the prayers too, as is stated in the hadeeth of Abu Dharr referred to above. Indeed, it is permissible to appoint an imaam just for them, apart from the imaam of the men. It was proven that when ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) gathered the people to pray qiyaam, he appointed Ubayy ibn Ka’b to lead the men and Sulaymaan ibn Abi Hathmah to lead the women. ‘Arfajah al-Thaqafi said: “ ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib (may Allaah be pleased with him) used to command the people to pray during the night in Ramadaan, and he would appoint an imaam for the men and an imaam for the women. I was the imaam for the women.”

I say: this is fine in my view so long as the mosque is big enough so that they will not disturb one another.

Number of rak’ahs of qiyaam

7 – The number of rak’ahs is eleven, and it is preferable in our opinion not to exceed this number, following the practice of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), because he never did more than that in his life. ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) was asked about how he prayed in Ramadaan. She said, “The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) never prayed more than eleven rak’ahs (of qiyaam), whether during Ramadaan or any other time. He would pray four, and don’t ask me how beautiful or how long they were. Then he would pray four, and don’t ask me how beautiful or how long they were. Then he would pray three.” (Reported by al-Bukhaari, Muslim and others).

8- A person may do less than that, even if it is only one rak’ah of witr, because of the evidence that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did this and spoke about it.

With regard to him doing it: ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) was asked how many rak’ahs the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to pray in witr? She said, “He used to pray four and three, or six and three, or ten and three. He never used to pray less than seven, or more than thirteen.” (Reported by Abu Dawood, Ahmad and others).

With regard to him speaking about it, he said: “Witr is true, so whoever wishes can pray five, and whoever wishes can pray three, and whoever wishes can pray one.”

Reciting Qur'aan in qiyaam

9 – As regards reciting from the Qur'aan during qiyaam, whether in Ramadaan or at other times, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did not set a limit or state what was too much or too little. His recitation used to vary, sometimes it would be long, at other times short. Sometimes in every rak'ah he would recite the equivalent of '*Yaa ayyuha'l-muzammil*, which is twenty aayaat; sometimes he would recite the equivalent of fifty aayaat. He used to say, "Whoever prays at night and reads one hundred aayaat will not be recorded as one of the negligent." According to another hadeeth: "…and reads two hundred aayaat, will be recorded as one of the devout and sincere believers."

When he was sick, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) recited the seven long soorahs in his night prayers, i.e., *al-Baqarah*, *Aal 'Imraan*, *al-Nisaa'*, *al-Maa'idah*, *al-An'aam*, *al-A'raaf* and *al-Tawbah*.

In the account of Hudhayfah ibn al-Yamaan praying behind the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), in one rak'ah he recited *al-Baqarah*, *al-Nisa'* and *Aal 'Imraan*, and he recited them in a slow and measured tone. It is proven with the soundest (most saheeh) of isnaads that when 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) appointed Ubayy ibn Ka'b to lead the people in praying eleven rak'ahs in Ramadaan, Ubayy used to recite aayaat by the hundreds, so that the people behind him would be leaning on sticks because the prayers were so long, and they did not finish until just before Fajr.

It is also reported in a saheeh account that 'Umar called the readers during Ramadaan, and told the fastest of them to recite thirty aayaat, the moderate ones to recite twenty-five aayaat, and the slowest ones to recite twenty aayaat.

However, is a person is praying qiyaam by himself, he can make it as long as he wishes; if others agree with the imaam, he may also make it as long as he wishes. The longer it is, the better, but a person should not go to extremes and spend the whole night in qiyaam, except on rare occasions, following the example of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) who said: "The best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad." If a person is praying as an imaam, he should make it only as long as is easy for the people behind him, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "If any of you leads the people in prayer, let him make it short, because among them are the young and the old, the weak, and those

who have pressing needs. But if he is praying alone, let him make it as long as he likes."

The timing of qiyaam

10 – The time for praying qiyaam is from after 'Isha until Fajr, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Allaah has added one more prayer for you, which is witr, so pray it between Salaat al-'Isha' and Salaat al-Fajr."

11 – Praying at the end of the night is better, for those who can manage it, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever is afraid that he will not get up at the end of the night, let him pray witr at the beginning of the night, but whoever feels that he will be able to get up at the end of the night, let him pray witr at the end of the night, for prayer at the end of the night is witnessed [by the angels], and that is better."

12 – If it is the matter of choosing between praying in congregation at the beginning of the night and praying alone at the end of the night, it is preferable to pray with the jamaa'ah, because that is counted as if one had prayed the whole night through.

This is what the Sahaabah did at the time of 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him). 'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn 'Abd al-Qaari said: "I went out with 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab to the mosque one night during Ramadaan, and saw the people scattered throughout the mosque, some praying individually, and some praying in small groups. He said, 'By Allaah, I think that if I gathered all of them behind one reader it would be better.' So he resolved to do that, and he gathered them behind Ubayy ibn Ka'b. Then I went with him on another night, and the people were all praying behind their reader, and 'Umar said, 'What a good innovation this is. What they sleep and miss – meaning the latter part of the night – is better than what they are doing,' – the people used to pray qiyaam at the beginning of the night."

Zayd ibn Wahb said: "'Abd-Allaah used to lead us in prayer in Ramadaan, and he used to finish at night."

13 – The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade praying witr as three rak'ahs, and explained this by saying: "Do not make it resemble Salaat al-Maghrib." Therefore the person who wants to pray three rak'ahs for witr must find a way to make it different (from Maghrib). There are two ways he can do this: either by giving salaam after the first two rak'ahs, which is the best way; or

by not sitting after the first two rak'ahs (i.e., praying three rak'ahs non-stop). And Allaah knows best.

Recitation during three rak'ahs of witr

14 – It is Sunnah to recite *Sabbih ismi Rabbika al-'A'laa* in the first rak'ah, *Qul Yaa ayyuha'l-Kaafiroon* in the second rak'ah, and *Qul Huwa Allaahu ahad* in the third rak'ah. Sometimes *Qul a'oodhu bi Rabbi'l-Falaq* and *Qul a'oodhu bi Rabbi'l-Naas* may be added as well.

It was reported in a saheeh report that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) once recited one hundred aayaat of *Soorat al-Nisa'* in one rak'ah of witr.

Du'aa' al-Qunoot

15 – A person may also humble himself before Allaah by reciting the du'aa' which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) taught to his grandson al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him), which is:

"*Allaahumma'hdinee fiman hadayta wa 'aafinee fiman 'aafayta wa tawallanee fiman tawallayta wa baarik lee fimaa a'tayta wa qinee sharra maa qadayt, fa innaka taqdee wa laa yuqdaa 'alayk. Wa innahu laa yadhillu man waalayta wa laa ya'izzu man 'aadayt. Tabaarakta Rabbanaa wa ta'aalayt. Laa majaa minka illa ilayk* (O Allaah, guide me along with those whom You have guided, pardon me along with those whom You have pardoned, be an ally to me along with those whom You are an ally to, and bless for me that which You have bestowed. Protect me from the evil You have decreed for verily You decree and none can decree over You. For surety, he whom You show allegiance to is never abased and he whom You take an enemy is never honored and mighty. O our Lord, Blessed and Exalted are You. There is no refuge from You except with You)."

Sometimes one may send blessings on the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and there is nothing wrong with adding other du'aa's that are known from the Sunnah.

16 – There is nothing wrong with reciting Qunoot after rukoo', or with adding curses against the kuffaar, sending blessings on the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or praying for the Muslims in the second half of Ramadaan, because it is proven that

the imaam used to do this at the time of ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him). At the end of the hadeeth of ‘Abd al-Rahmaan ibn ‘Ubayd al-Qaari mentioned above, it says: “… They used to curse the kuffaar in the middle, saying, ‘*Allaahumma qaatil al-kafarata alladheena yasuddoona ‘an sabeelik wa yukadhdhiboona rusulak wa laa yu’minoona bi wa’dik. Wa khaalif bayna kalimatihim wa alqi fi quloobihim al-ru’b wa alqi ‘alayhim rijzaka wa ‘adhaabak ilaah al-haqq* (O Allaah, destroy the kuffaar who are trying to prevent people from following Your path, who deny Your Messengers and who do not believe in Your promise (the Day of Judgement). Make them disunited, fill their hearts with terror and send Your wrath and punishment against them, O God of Truth).” Then he would send blessings on the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and pray for good for the Muslims as much as he could, and seek forgiveness for the believers.

After he had finished cursing the kuffaar, sending blessings on the Prophet, seeking forgiveness for the believing men and women and asking for his own needs, he would say: “*Allaahumma iyyaaka na’bud wa laka nusalli wa najud, wa ilayka nas’aa wa nahfud, wa narju rahmataka rabbanaa wa nakhaafu ‘adhaabak al-jadd. Inna ‘adhaabaka liman ‘aadayta mulhaq* (O Allaah, You do we worship, to You do we pray and prostrate, for Your sake we strive and toil. We place our hope in Your Mercy, O our Lord, and we fear Your mighty punishment, for Your punishment will certainly overtake the one whom You have taken as an enemy.” Then he would say “Allaahu akbar” and go down in sujood.

What should be said at the end of witr

17 – It is Sunnah to say at the end of witr (before or after the salaam):

“*Allaahumma innee a’oodhu bi ridaaka min sakhatika wa bi mu’aafaatika min ‘aqoobatika, wa a’oodhu bika minka. La uhsee thanaa’an ‘alayka, anta kamaa athnayta ‘ala nafsik* (O Allaah, I seek refuge in Your good pleasure from Your wrath, and in Your protection from Your punishment. I seek refuge with You from You. I cannot praise You enough, and You are as You have praised Yourself.”

18 – When he gave salaam at the end of witr, he said: “*Subhaan il-Malik il-Quddoos, subhaan il-Malik il-Quddoos, subhaan il-Malik il-Quddoos* (Glory be to the Sovereign, the Most Holy), elongating the syllables, and raising his voice the third time.

Two rak'ahs after witr

19 – A person may pray two rak'ahs after witr if he wishes, because it is proven that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did this. Indeed, he said, "This travelling is exhausting and difficult, so after any one of you prays witr, let him pray two rak'ahs. If he wakes up, this is fine, otherwise these two rak'ahs will be counted for him.

20 – It is Sunnah to recite *Idha zulzilat al-ard* and *Qul yaa ayyuha'l-kaafiroon* in these two rak'ahs.

From *Qiyaam Ramadaan* by al-Albaani

Following the imaam until he finishes Taraaweeh

The most correct opinion is that the number of rak'ahs for Taraaweeh is eleven, but I pray in a mosque where they do twenty one rak'ahs. Can I leave the mosque after the tenth rak'ah, or is it better to complete the twenty one rak'ahs with them?

It is better to stay with the imaam until he finishes, even if he is doing more than eleven rak'ahs, because it is permissible to do the extra rak'ahs, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever prays qiyaam with the imaam until he finishes, Allaah will record it as if he prayed the whole night" (reported by al-Nisaa'i and others. *Sunan al-Nisaa'i, Baab Qiyaam Shahr Ramadaan*), and because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Prayer at night should be two by two (rak'ahs), and when dawn approaches, pray one for witr." (Reported by the seven; this version reported by al-Nisaa'i).

There is no doubt that adhering to the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is better and brings more reward, so long as it is done properly and without haste, but if it is the matter of a choice between leaving the imaam because of the number of rak'ahs or going along with the extra that he does, it is better to go along with him, because of the ahaadeeth referred to above. At the

same time, you should advise the imaam to follow the Sunnah.

Which is better during the day in Ramadaan – reading Qur'aan or praying voluntary prayers?

Which is better during the day in Ramadaan – reading Qur'aan or praying voluntary prayers?

Praise be to Allaah.

The Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was to do a lot of different kinds of worship during Ramadaan. Jibreel used to review the Qur'aan with him at night, and when Jibreel met with him, he was more generous in charity than the blowing wind. He was the most generous of people, and he was at his most generous in Ramadaan. At this time he used to give more in charity and treat people even more kindly; he would read more Qur'aan, pray more, recite more dhikr, and spend time in I'tikaaf (retreat). This is the guidance of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in this aspect of this holy month.

As to whether it is better to read Qur'aan or to pray voluntary prayers, this depends on people's circumstances, and the true evaluation of this is up to Allaah, because He knows all things.

(From *al-Jawaab al-Saheeh min Ahkaam Salaat al-Layl wa'l-Taraaweeh*, by Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz, p. 45).

A specific action may be better in the case of any given individual, and another may be better for another individual, according to the degree to which a particular action brings a person closer to Allaah. Some people may be influenced more by naafil prayers and may focus on them and do them properly, which will bring them closer to Allaah than other deeds might, so in their case those deeds are better. And Allaah knows best.

Adding another rak'ah to the imaam's witr because

one wants to pray some more

Some people, when they pray witr with the imaam and he says salaam, they get up and do another rak'ah, because they want to do more prayers before praying witr later in the night. What is the ruling on this action? Is it considered to be forsaking the prayer with the imaam?

Praise be to Allaah.

We do not see anything wrong with this, and the 'ulama' stated that there is nothing wrong with doing this, so that his witr will be at the end of the night. He will be considered to have prayed with the imaam until he finished, because he stayed with him until he finished, and added another rak'ah for a shar'i reason, which was so that he could pray witr later in the night. There is nothing wrong with this, and it does not mean that he did not stay with the imaam until he finished, but he did not finish with him – he delayed it a little longer.

From *al-Jawaab al-Saheeh min Ahkaam Salaat al-Layl wa'l-Taraaweeh* by Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz, p. 41.